

May 22, 1962

Dr. James V. Neel  
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Dear Jim:

I am very sorry that my remarks about Genetics at Hiroshima could have had any flavor of personal criticism which was not intended at all. I fully realize the kind of difficulty that you remark on in organizing a genetic program and I guess I was merely expressing my disappointment that better could not have been done in the circumstances. Perhaps this was simply the result of too high an expectation. I do not see how any better could be done with part time and highly distractable supervision from the United States. I do feel that it would be extremely important to elicit greater interest in the ABCC project among Japanese who, if properly approached, might be expected to have the greatest interest in devoting themselves to the study of this population. And I do feel that this can be accomplished most successfully by stressing the opportunity for a basic study of population genetics rather than an exclusive concentration on the radiation problem. I do not think you are going to be able to get very far in your analysis of nondisjunction in this population unless you can get a much more zealous interest in the problem on the part of our Japanese colleagues.

My remarks on the congenital anomalies study, I thought, mirrored your own cautions with regard to the significance of the low incidence.

Thank you for giving me the reference to your paper in Lancet, March 10, 1962 - I had heard obliquely about it but hadn't yet located it and the people I talked to in Hiroshima had not yet seen it.

I hope I have been able to convey my impression that you did do an incredible job under very difficult circumstances, but that the fruitfulness of future work there must depend on securing more effective participation of the Japanese geneticists who have so far tended to avoid this study. I am very sorry if I have conveyed any other impression.

Cordially,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

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